

**AAS –American Astronomical Society
204th Meeting**

Session 12 Undergraduate Astronomy Curriculum

Poster, Monday, May 31, 2004, 9:20 a.m.-6:30 p.m., Ballroom

Session 12. Undergraduate Astronomy Curriculum

[12.08] Engaging minority students in NASA-related missions

J. Harrington, Jr. (MUSPIN, Goddard Space Flight Center), J.C. Leary (Applied Physics Lab, John Hopkins University), S.A. Austin (Medgar Evers College, CUNY), L. Hayden (Elizabeth City State University), L.P. Johnson (Medgar Evers College, CUNY), H. Schulte (University of Texas at El Paso), D. Walters (South Carolina State University)

Engaging undergraduate students in NASA-related research and education has been an ongoing component of the MUSPIN program and its participating minority institutions. This effort has been enhanced with the opportunity to involve undergraduate students directly in the development of a NASA mission. In an effort coordinated by James Leary, lead engineer for the MESSENGER mission based at APL, MUSPIN students from minority institutions were provided with summer internships working directly with scientists and engineer mentors in the integration and testing phases of the MESSENGER spacecraft. Students were able to apply their science, math and engineering knowledge and skills in areas including autonomy support and testing, mechanical support, design and telemetry support. The experience has been a motivating factor inspiring students to pursue careers with NASA and has enhanced informal education and public outreach for the MESSENGER mission in the MUSPIN community.

MESSENGER is a NASA Discovery mission to orbit Mercury and the spacecraft was developed by APL with industrial partners. MUSPIN is the Minority University Space Interdisciplinary Network based at Goddard Space Flight Center and its objective is to help train the next generation of NASA scientists and engineers.